

Bombay Natural History Society in order that the characters and true relationships of these little-known animals may be further studied.

BRITISH MUSEUM (NATURAL HISTORY),  
CROMWELL ROAD,  
LONDON, S.W. 7,  
September 15, 1961.

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### 5. THE DUGONG, *DUGONG DUGON* (MÜLLER), AT BOMBAY; AN INCORRECT RECORD

Dr. C. V. Kulkarni, Director of Fisheries, Maharashtra State, has drawn our attention to the statement at page 137 of Volume I of THE GAZETTEER OF BOMBAY CITY AND ISLAND, published in 1909, that the dead body of a dugong or sea-cow drifted ashore just opposite Colaba Church, on Bombay Island, in the year 1849. A foot-note in the GAZETTEER indicates that this statement is based on *The Times of India* dated 13-5-1849 and 16-5-1849.

*The Times of India* in those days went under the appellation of *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce* and appeared twice a week. Through the courtesy of *The Times of India* we were permitted to examine the files of old issues. There was no issue dated 13-5-1849, but the issue of 16-5-1849 carries a report that, in the forenoon of the previous Sunday (13-5-1849), 'a tolerably large species of whale-bone whale' drifted ashore on the rocks opposite to Colaba Church. The report goes on to mention that 'recently' some people in Ceylon had seen 'a *burra-muchee*, which was later identified as a dugong'. From the coincidence of the dates and the resemblances between the two accounts it appears that a mistake has been made and that the statement in the GAZETTEER, so far overlooked and unquoted, has no basis in fact. This is an interesting example of the necessity for careful scrutiny of assertions of fact, even in official records.

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November 15, 1961.

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